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Influence



John. P. Russell



The little children looked up and smiled as they dropped their simple curtsies.— p. 76.

# INFLUENCE; OR, THE LITTLE SILK-WINDER.




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# THE LITTLE SILK-WINDER.

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## CHAPTER I.

### ISABEL.

Sing them, my children, sing them still,  
Those sweet and holy songs !  
Oh, let the psalms of Zion's hill  
Be heard from youthful tongues !

It is many years ago since the following simple story was related by a kind friend to her youthful relatives.

There was a poor little silk-winding girl, employed at one of our great factories, whose name was Isabel. Every day, and all day long, except at the short intervals allowed for meals, she worked from the dawning to the setting sun, and sometimes even later. There were moments when she could not help envying those who were not obliged to toil so hard : but this did not often happen, for she was blessed with a cheerful and

contented spirit; and she might far more frequently be heard thanking God that she had health to labour, for she was an orphan, and had no one to work for her. Her parents both died when she was very young. They were poor but honest people, and taught her to love and fear Him who has promised to be “the Father of the fatherless:” so that Isabel did not feel so lonely when they were taken away, as she would otherwise have done.

“A little while,” said her mother, with her dying breath, “and we shall all be together again: thanks to that blessed Saviour who loved us and gave himself for us.”

“A little while,” repeated the orphan child, afterwards,—“only a little while.” And she would often look up and smile as she thought of the heavenly home which Jesus had purchased for her with his own life. This it was that made Isabel so cheerful and happy.

It was the bright summer-time, when the master of the factory announced his intention to give all the work-people a holiday: “A whole long day,” as Isabel called it, “to do what they pleased in.” Most of the young people had some friend or relative to visit; but the poor silk-winding girl was an orphan, and

alone in the world. Having nowhere to go, she thought what a pleasant thing it would be to spend the day in the woods, to look at the blue sky, to hear the birds sing, and to gather wild-flowers, as she used to do when a child.

The eventful morning arrived, clear and sunny. Isabel arose with the lark, thinking of the long, happy day before her. But she did not forget, ere she went forth on her glad holiday, to kneel down and pray. Her heart was full of joy and thankfulness, and she longed to do something for Him who had done so much for her. But what could she do? She was only a little child.

The clock struck six as Isabel went into the woods singing. She knew a great many hymns, and had a habit of singing them to herself when alone. Early as it was, there was one up before her—a pale, stern-looking man, who was crouching beneath the shadow of the trees as she passed: a second Cain, lying in wait to take away a brother's life. The song which Isabel was singing happened to be one learned years ago, at his mother's knee. The memory of his innocent and happy childhood came back to him as though it were but yesterday. The little golden-haired brother with whom he used

to play—how they loved one another then! How often had they wandered together, with their arms around each other's necks, singing that very hymn! The man's countenance changed as he recalled those old times; the weapon dropped from his grasp; and as he kneeled down with clasped hands, his tears fell fast. A human life—it may be that a human soul—was saved. But Isabel knew it not, as she passed on singing.

Just within the wood there was a rude hut, inhabited by a poor old woman, who earned a scanty living in the summer-time, gathering watercresses, or making up nosegays of honeysuckle, sweet-brier, and wild-flowers, which she sold at the neighbouring town; and managed to exist in winter by knitting coarse woollen stockings and comforters, which the villagers were glad to purchase of her, for a trifling sum. But she was too ill now to gather flowers or watercresses, or even to knit. She lay upon her bed helpless and hungry, and with a sad feeling of desertion pressing heavily upon her heart. She had forgotten—as we are so apt to do—God's mercies in times past, and how he has promised that he will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him. But it all came back to

her as Isabel went by, singing one of her sweet and cheerful hymns, one that the old woman knew well; for, although now desponding by reason of her infirmities, she was a humble and sincere Christian. The burden of Isabel's song was, "Trust in God."

"Yes," replied the poor old woman, crossing her thin hands, and lifting up her dim eyes to heaven: "'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.'"\*

Isabel passed on singing; and after a time, He who commanded the ravens to feed Elijah, when he sojourned in the wilderness by the little brook Cherith, put it into the heart of one of his children to go and take some nourishing food to the poor, feeble old woman, who lay sick and helpless in her little hut in the wood.

There were many sad hearts on that bright, sunny morning. There always are, somewhere in the world. A bereaved mother stood by the death-bed of her little child—her only child—

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\* Ps. xlii. 11.

and her tears fell fast upon its pale, happy-looking face. The sun shone gayly into the chamber, but every thing seemed very dark to her, now that she had lost her sole earthly treasure, the sunshine of her life. Isabel, little dreaming of what was passing within, went by the pretty, rose-covered cottage, singing. What was it that made her choose, all of a sudden, an old hymn about a little child whom God had taken away to be an angel in heaven, and how happy it was, playing on its golden harp before the throne? It may be that God put it into her heart. The mother listened, and was comforted. She no longer wished her child back again in this world of sin and sorrow; but, bowing down her head, said meekly—

“It is well! The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. His will, not mine, be done.” From that hour, she sorrowed not as one without hope. “She may not return to me,” was her constant thought, “but I may go to her: thanks to our blessed Redeemer!”

Isabel passed on singing, and dreamed not of the good which she had been permitted to do. All that long summer-day she spent in the woods, strolling under the pleasant trees, or



looking up into the blue sky, or gathering flowers and listening to the song of the birds, or else singing herself, and thanking and praising God for all his goodness. Her hymns cheered the woodman at his task. A beggar girl stopped to listen, and shared with her her simple crust and ripe cherries. A half-tamed deer came and ate out of her hand. A rich man's daughter paused to hear her sing, and felt rebuked when Isabel told her that she was only a poor, silk-winding girl, who worked from morning till night. "If she is so thankful and happy for her one holiday, what ought I to be?" questioned the lady, of her own heart. "And if, as I suspect from what she says, it is religion that makes her thus, who would not be religious?"

Isabel went home at night quite tired out; and had no sooner ended her evening prayer, and laid her head upon the pillow, than she fell fast asleep. She told her companions, the following morning, that she had had a very happy day.

## CHAPTER II.

## WE MAY ALL DO SOMETHING.

So teach ye me the wisest part,  
That I may ever move  
Along the city's ways with heart  
Assured by holy love,  
And vocal with such songs as own  
A Fountain in the world unknown.

It is impossible to pass through the world, as Isabel passed through the wood, singing hymns. But if we watch and pray for opportunities, God will often let us say a word at the right season, and bless it; just as he did the word of the little maid in the house of Naaman the Syrian.

Isabel was only a poor orphan girl; but before she went out she prayed to God. She longed, we are told, to do something for Him who had done so much for her; but she said within herself, "What can I do? I am only a little child."

Even a little child may do something. We may all do something, if we try; so that, in passing, we may leave behind a track of light. God has furnished us with a song for every step

of the way. And, although it is often very difficult to sing “the Lord’s song in a strange land,” we must endeavour to persevere, and to go on in his strength.

Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton is said to have resembled, in his walk through the world, “a man passing through the wards of a hospital, and stooping down on all sides to administer help where it was needed.”

A popular authoress tells us that she longs to be like the church-bells ; calling and inviting men to the house of prayer, as if they had said, “Come, ye sorrowing ; ye weary and heavy laden ; ye gay and thoughtless ones ! Come and hear God’s message of redeeming love !”

It is related of a good and noble lady, that “her last work every evening was to review with diligence all the works of the day—her thoughts, words, and deeds ; what happened in this room or that company ; what good or evil she had done ; what opportunities of benefiting others she had embraced or neglected ; what comforts and blessings she had that day received : and, after this examination, giving thanks, and begging pardon in every particular, having communed in her own heart, in her chamber, she was still.”

What a sweet example for us all to follow! How necessary it is, in passing through the world, to pause every now and then, and see what we are doing, or leaving undone, so that we may be more careful; to reckon up our mercies—greater in number than the sands upon the sea-shore—so that we may be more thankful; to call to remembrance our many sins, so that we may be more humble, more tender-hearted and forbearing towards others, and more grateful to our Saviour Jesus Christ!

God works by human means and instruments; by men, and women, and little children; by their influence upon others; by their conduct and conversation; by their tempers and dispositions; by their wealth, and talents, and affections; by their deportment as they pass through the world, but above all at home; by the friendships they form, the words they speak, the books which they read or leave about; by the letters which they write, the places they frequent, the strangers with whom they hold momentary intercourse; by the living, and by the dead.

“Without me,” said our Saviour to his disciples, “ye can do nothing.” “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”\* We must remember that without Him all our labour will be in vain, and be careful to do every thing in his name, and to his glory.

Let those who would resemble Isabel, as they pass through the world, recollect what the apostle Paul says in his Epistle to the Colossians, for it is to such that the following verse seems particularly addressed: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord;”—not unto men, but “to the Lord.”

The little silk-winding girl, when she sang her simple hymns in that lonely wood, sang them to God only. She was praising him, not seeking the praise of others. It would be well if we all praised God oftener than we do. And if we were only to sit down and think what he has done for us in giving his Son Jesus Christ to suffer for our sins, “the just for the unjust,” and permitting us to believe in him, whom to

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\* John xv. 4, 5.

know is life eternal, we should not be able to help doing so, but should feel constrained to exclaim with the Psalmist—"He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God! many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord."\*

There is no greater happiness on earth than to be made, in any degree, the instrument of happiness or of good to others, and then to give God all the glory. But it is a solemn thought, that if we are not instruments of good, we must be instruments of evil. There is no middle path. We are told, and rightly told, that "not only the gifted, but the most obscure individual exerts an influence which must be felt in the great brotherhood of mankind. No human being can pass through the world without increasing or diminishing the sum total of human happiness, not only of the present, but of every subsequent age of humanity. No one can detach himself from this connection. There is no sequestered spot in the universe in which he can retreat from his relation to others." Let no one ever say to himself or others, "I am of no consequence; I am poor and despised, and of no account;" or, "I am only one among many, and have no influence." Every person,

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\* Ps. xl. 3.

however limited his gifts, is continually operating for good or evil upon all connected with him. Those professing to be Christians are especially intrusted with a degree of influence, which, in another world only, will they be able properly to estimate.

In the way of means, there are no little things with God. The verse of a hymn—a text of Scripture—a kind word—a good book—a Christian letter—a passing warning—a cup of cold water, given in the name of Jesus,—all these have been blessed at various times, and will be unto the end of the world. Dear reader, will you not throw the weight of your talents or your influence, be it great or small, into God's treasury? If it should be only the latter, fear not, for he did not despise the widow's mite. His strength is made perfect in weakness. We have a loving Master; and if we sit at the feet of Jesus, making him our trust, and doing all in his name, and out of love towards him who loved us and gave himself for us, he will own our feeble endeavours, and say gently, in his own gracious manner, when the world or our consciences rise up to accuse us, as he said of Mary of Bethany, "Let her alone; she hath done what she could."

## CHAPTER III.

## HOME INFLUENCE.

Wouldst thou listen to its gentle teaching,  
All thy restless yearnings it would still;  
Leaf, and flower, and laden bee are preaching,  
Thine own sphere (though humble) first to fill.

I BELIEVE it is scarcely possible to live in a family where religion is sweetly exemplified, even by one member only, without deep convictions. Truly has it been said, that "our duties are like the circles of a whirlpool, and the innermost includes home." A modern writer has designated home, "heaven's fallen sister;" and a melancholy truth lies shrouded in those few words. Our home influence is not a passing, but an abiding one; and all-powerful for good or evil, for peace or strife, for happiness or misery. Each separate Christian home has been likened to a central sun, around which revolves a happy and united band of warm, loving hearts, acting, thinking, rejoicing, and sorrowing together. Which member of the family group can say, I have no influence? What sorrow, or what happiness, lies in the



power of each! "We shall never know until we are ushered into eternity, how great has been the influence which one gentle, loving spirit has exercised in a household, shedding the mild radiance of its light over all the common events of daily life, and checking the inroads of discord and sin by the simple setting forth of that love which 'seeketh not her own,' but which 'suffereth long and is kind.' "

"A lighted lamp is a very small thing, and it burns calmly and without noise, yet it giveth light to all who are within the house." And so there is a quiet influence, which, like the flame of a scented lamp, fills many a home with light and fragrance. Such an influence has been beautifully compared to "a carpet, soft and deep, which, while it diffuses a look of ample comfort, deadens many a creaking sound. It is the curtain which, from many a beloved form, wards off at once the summer's glow and the winter's wind. It is the pillow on which sickness lays its head and forgets half its misery." This influence falls as the refreshing dew, the invigorating sunbeam, the fertilizing shower, shining on all with the mild lustre of moonlight, and harmonizing in one soft tint many of the discordant hues of a family picture.

There are animalcules, we are told, “invisible to the naked eye, which make the sea brilliant as fire, so that every wave seems bordered with gold; and there are also small reptiles which occasion those miasms which by their plague can slay the strongest natures: so even spiritual existence has its monads, and the life-atmosphere of the family depends upon what the nature of these is.” Let us all endeavour to resemble the good animalcules, which, although invisible, make all around bright and golden-tinted.

And now let us glance for a moment on the home influence of those who are neither kind nor gentle. It is a sad picture, truthfully painted. “Do you not know,” writes the artist,—“Do you not know that they bestow wretchedness instead of happiness even upon those who are dearest and nearest to them? Do you not know that their very voice is dreaded and unwelcome as it sounds through their home? Is not their step avoided in the passage, or on the stairs, in the certainty of no kind or cheerful greeting, in the fear of angry words? Do you not observe that every subject but the most indifferent is lightly touched upon in their presence, or concealed from their knowledge, in the vain hope of keeping away food for their ex-

citement of temper? Deprived of confidence, deprived of respect, their society is shunned even by the few who still love them." They pass through their homes like the easterly wind, and a chilling blight falls on the domestic scene. Their influence is a fearful one. Anger begets anger. They are aptly compared to a jar of household vinegar, wherein are dissolved the precious pearls of daily life. They are unhappy in themselves, and they make others so. They are ill-tempered, and they spoil the tempers of those with whom they associate. Harsh and unloving, they breed hard thoughts in the breasts of others. They darken the sunshine of daily life. They weaken our faith in the good and beautiful. Their home influence, instead of being a blessing, becomes a curse.

Dear reader, is any member of your family suffering from the infirmity of an irritable temper? Try what a contrary influence—try what kindness will do. From daily and continual observation, you can most probably tell what things, what provocations are the likeliest to call forth this besetting sin. Endeavour, if possible, to avoid them; be on the watch for little opportunities of smoothing away difficulties. Remember that "a soft answer turneth

away wrath ;” and that kind words are as oil poured on the troubled waters. Seek to be always patient to the faults and imperfections of others ; for, doubtless, thou hast many of thine own. How blessed is he who by good words and deeds can bring a continual sunshine into the home where he dwells ! How blessed are the fruits of a cheerful and forbearing spirit, filled with love towards God and man !

The following prayer, written by an experienced Christian, is well worth learning by heart : “ Be pleased, O Lord, to bless the small, feeble endeavours of thy poor child, to do her duty to others ; for without thy blessing they are all ineffectual, and with thy blessing I need not doubt but they will tend to my own good, and the good of those I desire to serve—more particularly *at home*.” Elsewhere we find the same person praying thus—“ May I dwell nearer in spirit to my Redeemer, that increased humility, watchfulness, patience, and forbearance may be my portion ; that I may not only be saved myself, but that I may not stand in the way of others’ salvation, more particularly in that of my own household and family ; and that I may, if consistent with the Divine will, be made instrumental in saving others.” It is a

fearful thought that we may, by our influence, stand in the way of the salvation of others—especially those of our own household and family; and we do well to pray against it, and that we may be a help, and not a hindrance, one to another.

The same person from whom we have previously quoted, writing in after life, says: “How have gospel truths opened gradually to my view, the height, the depth, length, and breadth of the love of God in Christ Jesus, to my unspeakable help and consolation! Principally, I believe, through the dispensations of Almighty wisdom; partly from the soundness of faith of some near to me:” she meant her brothers and sisters, acknowledging their influence, and that it had been for good.

How great is the influence of the heads of families, of masters and mistresses, parents, brothers and sisters, and even of servants and little children! How many servants have had cause to bless the day when they first entered into a pious family, and not only listened to the precepts of God’s holy word, but witnessed how they were exemplified, and carried out in the daily life of those whom it was their privilege to serve! How many parents are there whose

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children have risen up and called them blessed! How many a brother and sister have owed their conversion, under God, to each other! How many Christian servants have been the first to introduce religion into a thoughtless and worldly family, choosing the time of sickness or sorrow, when the heart was softened and subdued, and asking God's blessing upon their humble endeavours! How many a little child has been permitted to speak a word for Jesus! "Those who neglect to promote the happiness, or to seek the salvation of any with whom the providence of an all-wise Creator has connected them by the most sacred ties, betray one of their chief trusts, and lose one of the greatest felicities which the world can afford."

The influence of a dear young friend, whose home conduct was a beautiful illustration of the faith that worketh by love, is thus described by an eye-witness: .

"She moved about the house like a sun-beam. I heard her singing as she passed to and fro, and her mother heard her too, and said, with a fond smile, 'It is Mary. She is always the same,—always happy. I do not know what I should do without her.' 'I do not know what any of us would do without

Mary,' repeated her eldest daughter, and the rest echoed her words.

"Her youngest brother is of a violent temper, and is always quarrelling with somebody; but he never quarrels with Mary, because she will not quarrel with him, but strives to turn aside his anger by gentle words. Even her presence has an influence over him. So it has on all her brothers; and to please her, they have left off taking in the Sunday newspaper, and go to church, or read good books at home. They none of them think as seriously as she does about sacred things, but they avoid making a jest of them when she is present, or saying or doing any thing to hurt her feelings. And some day, Mary hopes that what they now abstain from for her sake, will be abstained from out of love for God, and for fear of grieving the Holy Spirit.

"One day, upon Robert, the eldest brother, declining to join a party of pleasure on the following Sabbath, a friend observed that he had no idea he was so changed in his views, and recalled to remembrance the time when he had made a mockery of religion.

"'Yes,' answered Robert; 'but that was before Mary taught me to love it.'



“His sister, who was present, burst into tears. ‘I never taught you,’ said she; ‘I have never said a single word on the subject. God has taught you.’

“‘It is true that you have never said a word, my sister; but your actions have spoken for you, and for God.’

“‘To him be all the glory,’ whispered Mary, as she kissed him.

“The brother and sister are now constantly together; and Robert is, I think, likely to become a decided Christian. If it be so, he will always say that he owes it, under God, to her influence. And I firmly believe that there are others in the family who will feel the same ere very long. ‘To love and wait is excellent home philosophy.’”

What a blessing it is when religion enters a family! It may be in the youngest, or the meanest in the house, but it works, by God’s blessing, like the leaven hidden in the meal, until the whole lump be leavened. “Happy families!—but, oh! how few—where parents and children fear the Lord, and speak often one to another, and the Lord stands by hearkening, and writing down their words in his ‘book of remembrance,’ wherein he reckons up his jewels.”



It has been recommended as a beneficial practice, to offer up a short prayer even as your hand is upon the door to admit you into family intercourse—an intercourse which, more than any other, involves duties and responsibilities, as well as privileges and pleasures. If we could always remember to do this, our influence would doubtless be far more powerful, and the following touching lament would not be heard so frequently as it is: “I feel full of love to others,” writes Mrs. Fry, in her daily journal, “particularly those near me, but I have not towards them that patience and forbearance that I ought to have, and I think I am too easily provoked; not sufficiently long-suffering with their faults.” We must all have felt this at times; and at such times there is one little text—a sermon in itself—which it would be well to call to remembrance, containing as it does the exhortation and the motive to obedience. It is to be found in the fourth chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians, at the thirty-second verse—“Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.”

To the gentle, how many will be gentle; to

the kind, how many will be kind ! How many does meekness change to the like temper ! Force, it is true, may subdue ; but love gains. And recollect that we must love, in order to be loved. Believe me, there is no greater happiness than that of feeling that we can cheer, and soothe, and minister to the happiness of another, especially those of our own family and kindred. Remember that if we are not doing good in our own sphere, we are doing evil : if we are not acting for God, we must be acting against him. Will those we love, when we shall have passed from among them—and God only knows how soon that may be—be the better or the worse for our presence, for our influence ? It is a solemn question, a solemn thought, and may well make us careful, but not despairing. When our blessed Saviour said to Paul, “ My grace is sufficient for thee : for my strength is made perfect in weakness,” he said it for the encouragement of all who should believe in him, in all ages of the world : he said it for us.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GIFTED.

The blessed angels look and long  
To praise Thee with a worthier song:—  
And shall our silence do Thee wrong?

It is certain that mental gifts and accomplishments greatly increase our power and responsibility. The gifted, in most cases, become the presiding spirits of the intelligent circles in which they move, and become, by assent of all and without seeking it, the oracles of the rest, either for good or evil; consciously or unconsciously modifying and influencing the conduct, as well as the motives, of all with whom they are brought in contact; while many will hear of, and be guided by what they say and do, whom they may never meet on earth. In proportion as our influence is great, great should be our humility. Our fervent petitions for grace to use it aright will be somewhat proportionate to our consciousness of responsibility. The prayer of David should be continually

on our lips, "Let not those who seek thee be confounded for my sake, O Lord God of Israel!"\*

How often do we hear it said, when people are disputing upon some subject of right or wrong—"But such a one does it," naming some gifted person, "and we all know how good he or she is; therefore it must needs be right." And the argument is taken as conclusive. The power thus exercised by the talented is incalculable and wide-spreading, extending often to remote generations. As Isabel passed through the wood singing, so many have passed through the world writing at intervals hymns which remain to cheer and comfort us, when the hand that traced them is mouldering in the silent grave. We cannot take up a hymn-book without being reminded of such persons. And who does not love hymns? Who has not felt their soothing power in the season of sickness and sorrow! How often a verse will haunt and cheer us! How an old familiar hymn brings back the past! How often have we seen it melt the stubborn heart, and draw tears from eyes that had not wept before for many long and weary years! We learn them in our childhood, and love them in old age. They soothe

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\* Ps. lxi. 6.

alike the cradle and the bed of death; and many a dying saint has expired singing them.

“It is a great privilege,” said a Christian poetess, “to be permitted to speak a word for Jesus to one trembling sinner; how much greater when He helps us in our writings to lift him up before all the world, and condescends to bless and make use of our feeble endeavours to his own glory! How sweet to cast all our attainments, all our gifts at his feet, and crown him Lord of all for ever!”

“Every man,” writes the Rev. Thomas Adams, “should be as a little sun in his own circle, merely a creature of Divine goodness, manifesting God’s glory, and shining without merit.” The gifted and intellectual are generally looked up to as suns in their own little sphere: and they should be doubly careful to show forth the glory of God their Saviour, and adorn his doctrine in all things; and “to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith” they “are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.”\*

It is related of a gentleman who had been a skeptic from his youth, that his first thoughts

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\* Eph. iv. 1, 2.

about religion arose from observing the serious deportment of one of whose talents and intellect he had reason to think very highly, and how regular he was in its public duties, and in the constant practice of his every-day life.

“I never remember calling upon him,” said he, “without seeing his little clasped Bible lying upon the table, or upon his desk; sometimes open, as if he had just been reading it. Hitherto I had thought religion only fit for the poor and ignorant; but my friend was neither one nor the other; so I began to fancy that there must be something in it. I told Mr. S—— this, one day when I called, and I shall never forget his manner.

“‘Something!’ said he, laying his hand upon my shoulder, and looking kindly and sadly into my face, for it appears that he had never suspected until that moment how matters stood: ‘Something! there is every thing in it. Without religion, without the gospel of Christ, I cannot imagine how any one can exist.’

“Long and earnestly did we converse together, and his words sank into my heart, and were blessed to me in future years. A few days afterwards, I happened to call when he was from home, and amused myself in his ab-

sence by examining the contents of his valuable library ; congratulating him, upon his return, on the treasures he possessed.

“ ‘But you have overlooked my greatest treasure of all,’ said he.

“I turned round eagerly, and he laid his hand upon the little clasped Bible, and smiled. Thanks be to God, and him,” concludes the narrator of the above facts, “I can now truly say that the Bible is my greatest treasure also ; that the religion of Christ is every thing to me.”

The gifted must not only be watchful in great, but likewise in little things. What they do, others will do ; what they say, others will repeat ; where they lead, others will follow ; what they praise, others will approve ; what they disallow, others will reject. If they look serious when sacred themes are discussed, others will look serious too ; if they turn them into a jest, others will be quick in following their example. Even a smile at the wrong time may do mischief ; while a word spoken in season may become a word of power to one of the Lord’s little ones. The influence of the gifted will colour all around either in light or shadow, and bring a blessing or a curse.

It is a glorious privilege if we use it aright ; if we use it for Christ ; if we dedicate it to him,

and to his work. Are we gifted with eloquence?—Let us be eloquent for Jesus. Can we argue with force and brilliancy?—Let us argue for God's truth. Is our pen "as that of a ready writer?"—Let us write about him, and make mention of his righteousness. It may be that we may thus win souls to Christ. Have we sweet voices?—Let us sing God's praise. But if we cannot say what we wish, let us say what we can. If we cannot write of Jesus, let us talk about him. If we cannot sing hymns, let us act them. "Of them to whom much is given, much will be required:" but we may all do something, if we try.

Every station has its peculiar duties; every individual his peculiar gifts. There is not one so lowly, or so ill-endowed, who cannot do something for the love and service of the Redeemer God; not one so high and gifted that he may be excused for thinking any thing his own, that he should withhold it from him. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all."\*

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\* 1 Cor. xii. 4-6.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE LOWLY AND THE LOVING.

The alms most precious man can give to man  
Are kind and loveful words. Nor come amiss  
Warm, sympathizing tears to eyes that scan  
The world aright: the only error is  
Neglect to do the little good we can.

LOVE has often far more influence than talent. The one appeals to the reason, the other to the affections: the one speaks to the intellect, but the other goes straight to the heart. "It is beautiful to believe ourselves loved, especially by those whom we love and value." Yes, it is beautiful, certainly; but wo to us if we neglect the responsibility attached to it. When God permits us to win the regard of others, he places in our hands a sweet and powerful influence, which we should be very careful to use in his service and for his glory. Human affection, sanctified by the Divine blessing, may be made the instrument of much good: wanting that blessing, it is but a shining light without life or warmth.

The pious Jonathan Edwards describes a

Christian as being like "such a little flower as we see in the spring of the year ; low and humble on the ground ; opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun's glory ; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture ; diffusing around a sweet fragrance ; standing peacefully and lowly in the midst of other flowers." The world may think nothing of that little flower, it may not even notice it ; but, nevertheless, it will be diffusing around a sweet fragrance upon all who dwell within its lowly sphere.

It has been truly said, that the amiable, the loving and the unselfish almost insensibly dissuade from evil, and persuade to good, all who come within reach of their soothing power ; that no one can advance alone towards the happiness or misery of another world ; and little can the most insignificant of beings conjecture how extensive may have been the beneficial or evil effects which have attended their own, apparently, unimportant conduct.

"In the heraldry of heaven, goodness pre-  
cedes greatness:" so on earth it is often far more powerful. The lowly and the loving may frequently do more in their own limited sphere than the gifted. To yield consistently, in little things, begets the same yielding spirit in others,

and renders life the happier. We must never forget that we are all appointed to the station which we fill in this life by the wise Disposer of events, who knows what is suited to our various capacities and talents much better than we do ourselves; and who would not have placed us there if he had not something for us to do. How few there are who live up to their own power of being useful! Earth is our dwelling-place, where all have their appointed sphere of usefulness, their mission of love and duty, as they pass homeward to heaven.

A gentleman, travelling through a part of Wiltshire, where he had not been before for many years, could not help observing the peculiar neatness and even beauty of the little cottage-gardens which he passed, and which he did not remember having noticed when he was there last.

“No,” replied the friend who accompanied him; “it has only been so within the last few years, since Lucy D—— came to reside in the village. It is all owing to her.”

“But how can one person keep all these gardens so scrupulously neat?”

“You must ask her,” replied his friend Mr. L——, with a smile, and pausing as he spoke

to shake hands with a young and delicate-looking girl, plainly attired, and carrying in her hand a nosegay of flowers.

“Are they not beautiful?” asked she, holding them up. “Widow Green gave them to me, and she has plenty more. I was sure that they would grow, if she only tried. You cannot imagine how pretty they make her garden look.”

“She had no garden, I think, when first you knew her,” said Mr. L——.

“No, I believe not. I do not know what she would do without one now; she was saying so herself, this very morning; and that it was her greatest comfort.”

“My friend is very anxious to understand how you have managed to introduce so many gardens into the village, and to keep them all in such good order. He thinks that it must be a great deal of trouble for one person.”

“It is no trouble to me,” replied Lucy, simply, and with a modest blush. “I have nothing to do but to appear pleased, and to speak a word of praise now and then, and accept all their little flower-offerings. I always was fond of flowers.”

“But how did you contrive at first?”

“I almost forget. I do not think that I did

much. I only admired Mrs. Brown's flowers, and then she planted more to please me; and by-and-by others began to notice how pretty her garden looked, and to long to plant some also, and to come to me for seeds and cuttings. I do not think that I did much besides telling them the proper season for planting, and where I thought they would thrive the best. The little school-children weed, hoping that I shall be pleased to see the garden looking neat and nice; and so I am. The gardens of the poor are a great comfort to them."

"Yes," said Mr. L——; "it keeps them out of mischief. Many a poor man may now be seen working in his little garden, with his children around him, and his wife sewing peacefully in the cottage-porch, who used to go to the public-house. Many a happy home has sprung from the love of flowers."

Just then an old man came tottering towards us, holding a stick in one hand, and a flower-pot in the other.

"I have been looking out for you all day," said he to Lucy. "If you could spare a moment, I have so many things to ask and show you."

"To be sure I can," replied the girl, with a kind smile; and dropping a modest courtesy,

to shake hands with a young and delicate-looking girl, plainly attired, and carrying in her hand a nosegay of flowers.

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she went away with the old man, and left the two friends together.

“Well,” said Mr. L——, after a pause, “what do you think of our Lucy?”

“She appears to be very young, and does not look strong; but I was thinking of the power which one individual may exert for good over those around her.”

“But Lucy not only teaches and encourages the poor people and the little children to love flowers,” continued Mr. L——; “but tries to win them to Christ, and to make them love him. Many a simple homily have I heard her preach from the lily of the valley, or the flower of the field. Her influence is not only exerted for good—it is exerted for God, and he has deigned to bless it in more than one instance.”

Lucy D—— is neither gifted nor beautiful. Few know her even by name. It can only be said of her that she loves God, and she loves flowers. Contented and cheerful, she passes through life, making it seem all the brighter and the better for her brief sojourning. It has been well said of a kindred spirit, that, “looking to heaven as her rest, and to Christ as her Saviour, she seemed to have caught something of the calm serenity of her divine Master, some-



thing of his purity and love. In the world, but not of it, she was like one going cheerfully homeward, and singing as she went; while she scattered around her, in passing, holy counsels and instructions—kind words and actions—the bright sunshine of a lowly and loving spirit.”

There are some who assert, that, in their isolated position, they can influence no one. But there is no such thing as a thoroughly isolated individual. No man can live or act without affecting others in some degree, and to some purpose. If they have no power to do good, it may be because they seek it not. Let them rouse their dormant energies, and do something to make others happy. It is because they walk along with their eyes on the ground, instead of looking around them to see what they can do for God and for one another. It is because they pass through the world silently, instead of singing, that others, hearing them, may be gladdened and comforted. Or it is because they have neglected to pray; for we can do nothing without prayer. Or it is because they are walking in their own strength, and trusting in their own righteousness; instead of “coming up from the wilderness, leaning on the Beloved,” and making Him their all in all.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FRIENDSHIP.

If aught of grace or peace be mine,  
To one dear friend that peace I owe;  
God's instrument of love to me,  
She gently taught me all I know.

THE Rev. Robert McCheyne, blessing God for his mercies, says: "He has taken away friends that might have been a snare—must have been a stumbling-block,—I bless him for that. He has introduced me to one Christian friend, and sealed more and more my amity with another,—I bless him for that." A truly Christian friend is indeed one of the greatest blessings that can fall to our share on earth, and we may well bless God for it.

How many does a lovely example win to goodness! Who has not felt, as it were, tinctured with the goodness of those with whom they have been holding pleasant and friendly communion? There are some people, we are told, who exert on others "a moral power resembling the effects of climate upon the rude

and rugged marble ; every roughness is by degrees smoothed off, and even the colouring becomes subdued into calm harmony with all the features of its allotted position." All excellencies, either of mind or heart, are, in some mysterious manner, actually infectious ; but then, alas ! so it is with evil influences. How necessary it is to ask God's blessing upon all the friendships which we form, and that he may be pleased to make us a help, and not a hindrance, one to another, as we pass through the world.

The writer of this, recalling to mind a dear friend, can truly say, that since the day she first knew her, a change has come over her whole life. How many things have I not done for fear of grieving her, which were afterwards abstained from, for fear of grieving my Saviour ! I used to wonder whether she would approve of my actions, long before I thought of seeking the approbation of God. She was the instrument in his hands to lead me from error into "the truth as it is in Jesus." Her lightest word had weight. Years afterwards, I learned the chief secret of her sweet and powerful influence. "Since we have known each other," said she, "I have never ceased to pray for you."

One who knew McCheyne long and well,

speaking of him after he had passed away, says—"So much did we learn from his holy walk and conversation, that it is probable that scarcely a day goes by, in the which we have not some advantage from his friendship."

Almost the last whispered words of a young Christian to one who bent, weeping, over the bed of death, were these: "Your friendship has done me good." What a happy consolation to the survivor!

How different was the exclamation of another, as he passed away in the prime of youth, the victim of vice and intemperance; and turning to the companion—"the friend," as he called himself—who had led him astray, said bitterly—"Would to God that I had never known you!"

Another, stricken down by fever, and hearing for the first time of the gospel of Christ, as he lay upon his dying bed, said reproachfully to one, who, in spite of his unfaithfulness, had loved him long and well—"You were my friend, and you never told me this. For years we have walked and talked together, and you never spoke to me of Jesus. And now my poor head cannot bear, cannot understand it; now it is too late!" Delirium came on, and he passed away thus.

"It is an old saying, and one of fearful and

fathomless import, that we are here forming characters for eternity. Forming characters! Whose? Our own, or others'? Both; and in that momentous fact lies the peril and responsibility of our existence. Thousands of our fellow-beings will yearly, and till years shall end, enter eternity with characters differing from those they would have carried thither had we never lived."

When friends come to us for counsel in moments of disappointment and irritation, or for comfort in the time of sorrow or distress; when they look up to us, and say, "What must I do?—How must I act?—Where shall I seek for peace?" how fearful is our responsibility! How carefully should we weigh every word, and pause and pray, before we utter it. How great is our power at such seasons as these! We may be as beacon lights; or we may only resemble wandering stars. Above all, let us beware of saying to them, "Peace, peace! when there is no peace;" or of leading them to look for it anywhere but in the love and mercy of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

We read in the book of Proverbs, that it is the duty of friends to reprove one another; "faithful are the wounds of a friend."\* It is

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\* Prov. xxvii. 6.

where they see cause ; and it must be done in all gentleness, and in the spirit of truth and love. They are not our real friends who do not tell us of our faults ; neither are we true friends to others when we can behold them doing wrong, and remain silent. The effects of such friendships can be neither purifying nor good.

We can well remember walking through the woods in autumn with a dear friend, since dead. How beautiful they were, and how eagerly we admired together their brown and golden tints. Presently my friend began, as she usually did, to speak of better things, and to “look through nature up to nature’s God.”

“Earth,” said she, “is preaching her annual sermon : ‘We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have carried us away.’” And then she spoke of the evil of sin, and of Christ’s redeeming love. I shall never forget that evening walk through the woods. Like Isabel, she might be truly said to pass along singing, and the burden of her song was the same that the angels sing in heaven—“Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”\* Before the spring

flowers bloomed she had passed away; but the falling of the leaf never fails to bring back her memory and her influence.

How natural it is to take an interest in that which interests those we love! Have we a friend who is a botanist?—With what a different eye we soon begin to regard flowers; and how we long to understand something about them, in order that we may be able to join our friends in this pleasant study. Have we a friend who is musical?—How we love music! Are our friends fond of reading?—What a fresh interest we take in books! Are they religious?—How, in a manner, we even begin to imitate them in this also; although it may be only out of love for them! Oh, how thankful we ought to be if God, at any time, is pleased to make use of us as instruments and magnets to draw the hearts of our dearest friends towards himself. What a privilege to be allowed to help one another forward, if it be but one step, nearer to glory! But we should be ever ready to exclaim, in all humility, “It was not I;” and to give God the honour.

Many beloved and valued friends may pass away before another year shall have gone by; or we ourselves may be called home. What

has been our influence over others? What effects shall we leave behind? Have we used the power given to us for good or for evil? Are our friends the better or the worse for loving, and trusting, and, it may be, looking up to us? Are they any nearer heaven? If they die first, will they say of us, "Your friendship has been a blessing to me;" or, "Would to God that I had never known you?"





## CHAPTER VII.

## THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS.

“Trees yielding all fruit, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.”

CICERO calls a library “the soul of a house :” a solemn thought, and one that should make us very careful. We heard of a gentleman, not long since, refusing a richly-bound copy of a popular but dangerous theological work, which had been offered him for his library. “It is not,” said he, “that I fear its effects on my own mind, but only lest it should hurt and unsettle others of the household, who are less fixed and decided in their views.”

Seneca terms books “his friends ;” and hints somewhere, that we should be alike careful in our choice of them as in choosing our most intimate companions: while Plutarch tells us, with much quaintness, that “we ought to regard books as we do sweetmeats ; not wholly to aim at the pleasantest, but chiefly to respect the wholesomest: not forbidding either, but approving the latter most.” Milton has called

a good book "the precious life-blood of a master-spirit."

To have dangerous books lying on our tables is like leaving so much poison about; while good books are God's messengers. Servants are apt to look into the books which are left in their way. Visitors take them up in idle moments—while waiting for dinner, or on wet days—and are struck perhaps by some line or passage, which God brings home to their hearts with the lightning-flash of conviction. Many a one has traced his or her first serious thought about religion to a book thus accidentally, or rather providentially, taken up and read. On the Sabbath-day we should be especially careful not to leave any temptation to break it in the way of others, and have nothing on our tables but proper Sabbath books.

A young Christian, speaking of the day when she first seriously resolved, by God's help, to renounce the world, and give herself wholly to Jesus and to his service, writes thus: "On the afternoon of that ever-to-be-remembered Sabbath I was left alone; and feeling very restless and unhappy, looked around for amusement. A little paper 'On Eternity' lay on the chimney-piece: I read it, and felt that I must pray."

In the evening, sad and unsettled, she again had recourse to a book; this time it was the "Life of Brainerd." Had she been able to find any other books about, she would doubtless have read them in preference; but she lived in a pious family, who were very careful about these things. It pleased God to bless that little tract, and that biography, to the warning, strengthening and confirming of his poor, weak child. And that night she openly declared her belief in Jesus, and her earnest desire to live henceforth to his glory.

"I cannot force my servants to read good books," said a dear old friend, "but I always take care that they shall have them to read; and who knows but that some day they may be blessed to them?"

On the same principle, the wedding-present which she invariably made all her young friends on the day of their marriage—and she had a great many friends, for every one loved her—was a Bible.

"If they do not think much of it now," she would say, "sooner or later the season is sure to come when they will find out its value. I remember once giving a book to a person in whom I took a deep interest. In spite of its

gay and handsome binding, it was a serious book; and I prayed fervently to God, that he would be pleased to bless it to her. Happening to call at the house nearly three months afterwards—for I left town in the interval—I found it lying upon the drawing-room table, with the leaves still uncut. My young friend coloured when I pointed it out to her, and pleaded in excuse her numerous engagements. When I was gone, as she has since told me, she set down and cut it open at once, peeping in here and there; but she did not read it, for she saw that it was not the sort of book to interest her.

“Time passed away, and as the gay binding faded, the book was removed to make room for a more costly one, and placed in a room then empty, but soon afterwards occupied by a dear sister of the owner, who came there on a visit, and, as it subsequently proved, to die; but not before that little book, under God’s blessing, had been made the instrument of opening her eyes to ‘the truth as it is in Jesus,’ and leading her to him as the sinner’s only Refuge. After she died, the little faded book became the chief treasure of her affectionate and now pious sister. And I have heard her say that, next to

her Bible, she prizes it more than any thing else upon earth."

Have we not said that great may be the influence of one book? We may never know it. We may think that our gifts and prayers have been offered in vain. We may see it flung aside and disregarded; but in some sick and lonely hour, when the heart is sorrowful and subdued—or, it may be, in moments of ennui, or idleness—it will be taken up, and God will remember our prayers, for Christ's sake, and bless it to those we love.

A party, travelling for pleasure, were once detained for several weeks by the illness of one of their number. It was a wild sea-coast, far away from any town or village; and the weather being particularly unfavourable, they were somewhat at a loss how to get through the long and wearisome days. There was no library, they were told, within twenty miles; and the few books that they had brought with them were soon exhausted.

"I do not know what we shall do," said one of the party. "And it is of no use applying to Mrs. B——, for she never has any thing but 'good' books."

The lady alluded to was, nevertheless, re-

quested to produce her little store, which she willingly did. And although they did not look very inviting to the rest, it was better than nothing. With the help of Mrs. B——'s "good" books, the little party managed to get through that day ; and the next, the sun came out and they flung them aside, and began to feel more cheerful—all but one, and he read on like a person awakening from a long sleep, the sleep of sin and death ! A fortnight afterwards, he left, with the rest of the party, a changed man—a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit had been his Teacher ; the instruments were Mrs. B——'s "good" books.

If we give away books—and they are common presents among kindred and friends, and, above all, to little children—why not give them such as will do more than merely amuse,—instruct and make them wiser, and better, and holier ? If we offer to read to a sick friend, why choose a work of fiction, instead of the volume of God's truth ? If we acknowledge the influence of books over ourselves and others, how careful should we be in the selection of those which we make the companions of our solitary hours, the unconscious modellers of our future thoughts and lives. If we love, and

read, and praise them, others will love and read them also.

It may be that there are still some in the world who will tell us that they have no power over others; that they are poor and lonely, and that no one cares what they read, or what they do. We have shown this to be impossible; but admitting it, we would say to such, You can give away a tract. You may be too poor to make presents of handsome books, with gay bindings; but God's blessing will rest upon a little tract, if you remember to give it in the name of Jesus. How singularly has God made use of such means in the conversion of thousands; in instructing the ignorant, comforting the afflicted, warning the unconverted, and in bringing the sinner to Christ! Who shall say that they have no influence in the world, although in passing through it they may only be able to give away a tract? Isabel was only a poor orphan child: try and pass through the world giving tracts, as she passed through the wood singing hymns. Recollect that she never knew, when she went home at night, how much good God had permitted her to do; but she spent a very happy day nevertheless. And so may you as you pass homeward to heaven.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## OUR CONVERSATION.

Speak gently ! 'tis a little thing  
Dropp'd in the heart's deep well :  
The good—the joy which it may bring,  
Eternity shall tell.

THE Egyptians have a saying, that “the tongue is an angel ; good or bad, that is as it happens.” Certain it is that its power is very great ; and we have all constant need to pray, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips.”

“Conversation,” writes Seneca, “forms a large portion of the comfort of human life :” and we are told that, without it, the best and wisest men live only for themselves. Plato prefers conversation to books, and believes its influence to be more powerful and abiding : and we are told that, before now, “a sentence has formed a character, and a character subdued a kingdom.”

“In our connection with the world, many occasions will unexpectedly offer, when the heart is wakeful and active to improve them.



The common topics of earthly conversation may furnish a channel for heavenly intercourse ; so that our communications, even with the world, may be like Jacob's ladder, whose bottom rested upon the earth, but the top reached unto the heavens." Seasons of health and sickness, times of peculiar suffering or enjoyment, new occurrences, accidents, or change of circumstances, will always afford themes for religious conversation. We knew a gentleman, who, in order to prevent the conversation from becoming desultory and trifling, would frequently begin by remarking in the morning at breakfast, "I have been reading, or meditating, on such a chapter ;" thus affording us food for profitable thoughts during the remainder of the day. Conversation should always be improving, even where it may not directly aim at edification.

Some of our youthful readers may remember the fairy tale of the young girl, who, whenever she opened her mouth, dropped diamonds and pearls and precious stones ; so that many grew rich from only hearing her speak and gathering up those jewelled accents.

Kind words are the diamonds and pearls of every-day life. They have more music in them than the ringing of gold. But they are doubly

precious when they lead us to “the Pearl of great price”—to the knowledge of the Saviour. Let us all endeavour so to act and speak in our little sphere of usefulness and duty, that others may be the richer and happier for our presence and our influence. Speak joyfully to the young, cheerfully and tenderly to the old, and scatter the bright gems of love and sympathy along the pathway of all we meet.

“The language of reason, unaccompanied by kindness, will often fail of making an impression. It has no effect on the understanding, because it touches not the heart. The language of kindness, unaccompanied by reason, will frequently be unable to persuade; because, though it may gain upon the affections, it wants that which is necessary to convince the judgment. But, let reason and kindness be united in your discourse, and seldom will either pride or prejudice continue to resist.” The united influence of kindness and reason—we cannot help putting kindness first—is irresistible.

How frequently is a word, dropped in conversation, remembered long after those who uttered it have forgotten the whole occurrence. Some casual remark or careless jest, which seemed at the moment scarcely to be noticed, may, per-

haps, have stamped its permanent impression on the mind of another. A single sentence will often shine upon our memory with singular distinctness, either to guide us aright or lead us astray. When talking of sacred things, it is well to pray before we speak; and never to enter upon these subjects lightly. Neither must we neglect them altogether. Surely the day in which we have been fluent in worldly conversation, and yet have neglected our opportunities of speaking a word for Christ, must be considered a lost day.

McCheyne, blessing God for his mercies, as he never failed to do, says—"He has helped me to give up much of my shame in pronouncing his name, and appearing on his side, especially before particular friends. Bless him for that!" We are all too apt to be ashamed of the name of Christ. And yet, how natural it would seem to talk of what we love! How inconsistent it is to call ourselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth, and yet never to speak to one another of the home to which we are travelling.

We read in Proverbs that "a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver."\*

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\* Prov. xxv. 11.

That "heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad."\* And again, "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!"† Our Lord says that "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."‡ Our words are heard in heaven. "There is not a word in my tongue," exclaims the Psalmist, "but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether."§ Those were solemn words which we have already quoted in a previous chapter—so solemn, that we may be excused for repeating them here: "You were my friend," exclaimed the unfortunate youth, hearing for the first time of the gospel of Christ, as he lay, fever-stricken, upon the bed of death,—“You were my friend, and you never told me this. For years we have walked and talked together, and you never spoke to me of Jesus.” Are there none in like circumstances who might say the same of us? It is a fearful thought.

"How many opportunities," was the touching lament of another young person, at the point of death,—“How many opportunities have I neglected of speaking a word for Christ, and

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\* Prov. xii. 25.

† Prov. xv. 23.

‡ Matt. xii. 36.

§ Ps. cxxxix. 4.

entreating poor sinners to come to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!' I humbly hope that God will forgive my silence, for his dear Son's sake, and strengthen me henceforth to be more earnest and faithful in his cause."

We cannot doubt God's forgiveness, asked as it was in the name of Jesus Christ; but she had little opportunity of glorifying her Saviour upon earth, as we trust she is now glorifying him in heaven. A few hours after having given utterance to the words above recorded, she fell asleep, and so passed away. Oh, let us take heed to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; for "the night cometh when no man can work."

"Do you remember," said a friend, after a separation of many years, "what you once told me about the little star which you saw shining over the sea at Sandrock? I often recall to mind your words when I look at it, and think of you." Oh, how earnest was the wish at that moment that the words had been better worth remembering.

We are never perhaps so truly happy as in the free interchange of thought and feeling with those we love, and who love us; when the

sentiments of the heart spring to the lips, and out of its abundance the mouth speaketh. Great is our influence at such seasons; great need have we then of David's prayer—"Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer!"

How good it is to lay up God's words in our hearts, talking of them when we sit in the house, and when we walk by the way; when we lie down, and when we rise up! How sweet to realize that exquisite passage in Malachi, at the third chapter and the sixteenth verse: "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."

As we pass through the world, God will often let us speak a word for him, if we ask him, and are careful to look out for opportunities; and make it perhaps a word of power and comfort—"a word in season to him that is weary,"\* for He only can stamp it upon the hearts of others, and make the fruit of the lips to grow. May all those who hear the sound of our voices,

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\* Isa. l. 4.

as we pass among them, be comforted, and cheered, and strengthened, and made wiser, and better, and more holy. May they learn from our words, as some did from Isabel's hymns, to be kindly affectioned one towards another, and to put their trust in God. And "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."\*

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\* Col. iii. 17.



## CHAPTER IX.

## LETTER-WRITING.

“ Letters which are links that bind  
The absent to us ; letters which have power  
To wring the heart, or wake the ready shower  
Of sympathy—or on the soul, when sit  
Doubts of God’s goodness, like ill-omen’s birds,  
Come to disperse them with sweet, soothing words,  
That give relief in sorrow’s wildest fit.”

THE effect produced by letters is incalculably great. Absence softens the heart, and inclines it to receive many a warning word, many a solemn admonition, which it would most probably resent if spoken by those near, even though they might be dear. Letters have often been God’s messengers. If ever we are permitted to do any good by means of them—and we may be, if we try—let us remember that it is all of Him, and that there is nothing left for us but self-renunciation and praise to Him.

How useful has the kind, judicious, well-timed letter of a Christian friend frequently proved ! The author of “ The Listener,” and many other good books, traces her first serious thoughts to



such a letter, written by one who was too timid to trust herself to speak of these things.

Another, who has since been permitted to bear her grateful testimony to her Saviour, and write little books, in his name, concerning the faith which she once denied, thankfully ascribes her conversion to the same cause. She had written something which the world called ingenious; and it might have been ingenious, but it was unsound and unscriptural. Nevertheless, there were many found to praise it; and many were the letters, full of commendation, which she was continually receiving.

One day, a kind friend, to whom she had been showing some of these, said unhesitatingly, "I should like you to see the letter which I have just received about your little work; but I am afraid lest it should vex you." The curiosity of the young authoress was roused, and she never rested until the letter was in her own possession. It was from a clergyman, to whom her work had been shown. The words which particularly struck her in it were these:—

"Your friend may be all that you describe; she may be very amiable and talented; but, poor girl! I am afraid that she is not a Christian—that she does not believe in Christ."

The young authoress said little ; but she asked leave to keep the letter, and she has it now. We have seen it many and many a time ; and the paper is faded, and worn, and blotted with tears. The words which she had read fastened upon her mind, and haunted her day and night, until she was mercifully brought to confess their truth and faithfulness, and learned at length to know, and believe, and put her whole trust in the merits of her Divine Redeemer alone. That letter was one of the most powerful instruments used by the Holy Spirit to bring her out of the darkness and error of a corrupt faith into the glorious light of the truth as it is in Jesus.

We should never write a long letter without a little word of Christ. McCheyne is said to have had a holy skill in dropping a word for his Master upon all occasions. He wrote few letters in which the name of Jesus was not mentioned, or something of his Spirit breathed forth. Writing to a member of his family, he says—

“The Tay is before me now, like a resplendent mirror, glistening in the morning sun. May the same sun shine sweetly on you ; and may He that makes it shine, shine into your heart,

and give you the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

We know one who never wrote the commonest letter without prayer. "If we think of it," said she, "it is a very solemn reflection that these silent witnesses either for good or evil may remain to influence others long after we ourselves are laid in the grave." Her words have come to pass since then, and her letters are preserved and read over with tears. There is scarcely one in which she does not allude to heavenly things:—"It seems so natural," to quote her own words, "both to write and speak of what we love."

Wilberforce, addressing Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, says, "I do not like to conclude my letter without one serious word." Oh, if we could all remember to think thus, how much more useful we might become. Writing to those we love, in distant places and at distant intervals, it is impossible to calculate what may have come to pass since we last addressed them, or how much in need they may stand of our affectionate counsel; and, above all, of being reminded of better things.

It is interesting to remark how frequently a letter will arrive at the exact moment when

most required—like Isabel's hymns—and as if God had put it into the writer's heart to send it just then, and what to say, as doubtless he often does.

We heard once of a Christian letter being put into the hands of a young girl while in the very act of trimming a ball-dress to wear that evening. "I went all the same," said she, "but it haunted me continually, so that I could not take pleasure in any thing; and I date from that night, and from the blessed effects of that letter, the gradual weaning of my heart from worldly things to Christ."

We once saw a little packet carefully sealed up, and labelled, "Letters received from a friend, during sickness." "They were more than medicine to me," said the possessor; "so full of comfort, so full of Christ. I used to lie with them under my pillow. I would not part with these letters for their weight in gold." The letters of those we love are indeed of priceless value; especially when the One Name is written therein.

Letters are a source of communication between loving and divided hearts. Most people like writing and receiving them, but few pause to dwell upon the power which they may exer-

cise over others by means of them. They take their pens in their hands without ever thinking of using them for God's glory. They discourse eloquently of the world, but seldom speak of heaven. They make mention of almost every thing but the "one thing needful." They speak of the creature, and not of the Creator. They tell where they have been, and all that they have beheld; but it is to be feared that they have never been with Jesus, for they do not speak of him. They tell all they think; but, alas! God is not in their thoughts. They speak of what they love;—oh, if their hearts were filled with the love of Christ, how could they be silent concerning him?

■ We have said that letters are God's messengers, awakening, comforting and refreshing the world-wearied and the sorrowful, if we will only send them forth in his name, and write them with a single eye to his glory. In this life we may never know the good that they do; but we shall know it in the life to come, thankfully ascribing it to Divine influence. As Isabel passed through the wood singing, so may we pass through the world writing continual hymns of praise and thanksgiving to God through Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE PLACES WE FREQUENT.

“ 'Tis religion that can give  
Sweetest pleasure while we live :  
'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die.”

WE are all connected with some one—it may be many—who will be acted on by our example, and insensibly led to love the things that we love, to take a pleasure in our pleasures, and an interest in our pursuits. For their sake, if not for our own, let us be very careful what those pleasures and those pursuits are ; and whether they tend to bring us any nearer to holiness and to God.

Mrs. Fry, speaking of her reasons for giving up frequenting all places of public amusement, says, “ I saw that they only tended to promote evil ; therefore, even if I could attend them without being hurt myself, I felt that in entering them, I lent my aid to encourage that which I was sure, from what I saw, must hurt others.” And she concludes by praying that God would keep her from ever hurting or bringing discredit

upon his blessed cause; but enable her to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before him; and so to abide in the light and life of Christ her Saviour, that many might be led by her means, not from, but to her Father in heaven.

The power which we exercise over the minds of others is far more extensive than is generally imagined. It was once pleaded in defence of theatrical amusements—"There cannot be any great harm in theatres, for Mrs. G—— goes, and she professes to be so strict!" It is a solemn thing to make a profession, and not endeavour to be consistent.

A short time since, a lady professing much seriousness, and whom many loved and thought highly of, went to a fancy ball. Those who remembered her words were staggered when they heard of it; and their confidence in all that she had said was greatly shaken. Not a few, following her example rather than her precepts, went back again into the world. She was sorry afterwards, and said that she had been over-persuaded to go to the ball. We should never suffer ourselves to be persuaded to do wrong: and it is still worse when others are injured, and discredit brought upon the religion

which we profess. Believers should be very careful to walk as the children of light, and to "abstain from all appearance of evil."

We believe that a portion of quiet and recreation is not only allowable, but necessary and right, and in the ordering of a kind Providence for us all. Brooks are granted us by the way, as we pass through the world; wells in the desert, where we may rest, and be refreshed, and go on our way rejoicing; fountains in the wilderness, beside which we may sit and sing. In all our amusements, let us first ponder well whether we can ask God to bless them; and if so, let us pursue and enjoy them freely. "It is the test of their innocence, when we are able to thank God for them."

Simple pleasures, it has been said, are the only safe ones, because they alone leave the mind free for the exercise of devotion, and the affections warm and fresh for the contemplation of "the things that belong to our peace." How can we go to those places where the thought of God must leave us; where our love for him must be chilled; where our minds are unfitted for prayer at night, and disabled from devotional service the next day; and our imaginations filled for days and weeks with un-



holy images and ideas, with which the thought of him cannot, must not be intermingled?

One evening, at a party of gay young people, the conversation turned upon sudden death.

“How shocking it was about poor Clara N——,” said one. “She had been quite well all day; in the evening some one brought her a ticket for the opera, which she declined, complaining of a slight headache. But she said no more of her headache after they were gone, but appeared as cheerful as usual. It was the custom to have family prayers every morning and night. At their conclusion on this particular night, all rose up from their knees as usual, except Clara. After a few moments’ silence, one of her sisters laid her hand gently upon her shoulder; but she never moved—she was dead.”

“How shocking!” echoed her companions. “But it would have been still more so had she died at the opera.”

“Surely,” observed one, in a low voice, “we ought not to go where we should be afraid to die.”

Some smiled, but there were one or two who agreed with the last speaker, and several who could not get her words out of their heads for a long time afterwards; so that the memory

of them spoiled all their pleasure. When they heard the name of God taken in vain, and witnessed the mockery of prayer, and saw heaven itself, with its holy angels, travestied before their eyes, they could not help thinking, "What if I should die now!"

It is related that a lady, travelling in a stage-coach with the Rev. James Hervey, was conversing with great volubility of speech on the pleasure which she derived from frequenting the theatre. "There is," said she, "first, the pleasure of thinking of it beforehand; then the pleasure which I experience when there; and, lastly, the pleasure which I derive from it afterwards, by reflecting upon the entertainment."

"There is one pleasure, madam," replied Mr. Hervey, mildly, "which you seem not to have taken into your account."

"And pray, sir, what is that?" demanded his companion.

"The pleasure that it will afford you on a dying-bed."

No reply was made to this rebuke; and as there were others in the coach at the same time, it is to be hoped that some of them thought seriously of it.

It was the true saying of an old divine, that

“Christ without the world is enough; but the world without Christ is nothing.” Let us show that he is enough, and more than enough, and that we are well satisfied with our heavenly inheritance, and to be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, according to his own gracious promise.\* The Holy Spirit himself has taught us how we ought to walk, and that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”†

Precept in all cases is good; but example is better, and far more influential. It is well to bear our testimony against worldly pleasures amid worldly scenes; but it is better to live so that those around us may see how happy and cheerful we can be without them. A Christian may do a great deal of good by only looking happy. The hour will come when many shall be weary of those things in which they now take delight; when they shall feel within their

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\* 2 Cor. vi. 18.

† Titus ii. 12-14.

hearts an aching void, which earthly pleasures can never satisfy. And if at such times they behold the child of God, still calm and peaceful, rejoicing in his Father's love, will they not long to exchange the laughter in which the heart is sad, for that peace which passeth all understanding?

“How happy Laura B—— always seems!” was the exclamation of a young acquaintance; “and yet she never goes to balls or theatres.”

Oh, let us all strive to recommend, by a cheerful demeanour, the religion which we profess, and which we love; and uphold the Christian standard in a humble and watchful and prayerful walk before the Lord, and before our fellow-creatures. In the world, but not of the world, let us, so to speak, pass on our way singing, that others may hear us and be glad, and say within themselves—“The religion of Jesus must be a very happy thing, after all.”



## CHAPTER XI.

## OUR INFLUENCE UPON STRANGERS.

It is not enough, we are told, "that we act and mean kindly in our intercourse with strangers; we must manifest kindly feelings by a gentle and conciliatory manner." To increase the happiness of one human being—to speak peace to a mind oppressed with sorrow or disappointment—what a delightful privilege! Old Humphrey tells us—and Old Humphrey is one of those who pass through the world singing, and finding good in every thing and everywhere—that "every sunny thought, every kindly deed, every event, however trifling, that confers a momentary joy, is in itself a blessing."

Smiles and kind words constitute a considerable proportion of the wealth of human benevolence; and the more we give away, the richer we become. We have elsewhere likened them to diamonds, and pearls, and precious stones; they also resemble flowers—the hearts-ease and forget-me-not—the way-side flowers of everyday life, which we may all gather, and exchange

with mutual benefit, as we pass through the world.

A very little circumstance, a very trifling kindness, a very few words, done and spoken at the right time and in the name of Jesus, have often been made powerful for good. A fond but injudicious mother was speaking one day, in a small party, of the talents and abilities of her only daughter. "It is perfectly astonishing," said she, "what Adèle does; and yet she has very little time to herself."

A stranger, who happened to be present, drew the blushing girl towards her, and asked her kindly how it was she managed.

"I study at night," was the reply, "after I am in my own room, and every thing in the house is quiet. I can always do most then."

"But do you not read a little in the Bible, and pray to God?"

Her companion was silent.

"Poor child!" said the lady, looking at her kindly, and with tears in her eyes: "poor child! what good will all your learning and accomplishments do you without Christ? What good would they do you on the bed of death? And you do not appear to be very strong. Promise me that henceforth you will give those

quiet hours to God. You do not know how sweet it is, having prayed to the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, to lie down with our sins forgiven us for his sake ; but you will know, if you pray aright."

Adèle was touched by her earnestness. She promised to begin that very night, and she kept her word.

"From that time," said she, writing years afterwards to a dear friend ; "from that time a change came over my whole life. Her words haunted me. Amid the praises of others, I heard only her pitying voice—'Poor child ! What good will all your learning and accomplishments do you without Christ ?' God made them words of power. Upon inquiring about the lady to whom I owed so much, I learned that she left the country the very day after we met, to join a dear sister who was seriously ill. I never saw her again ; but I shall know her in heaven."

Not very long since, the inmates of a stage-coach were placed in circumstances of extreme danger. One lady fainted ; another, not being able to unfasten the door, madly attempted to fling herself from the window ; while a third was observed to draw a tiny book from her



pocket, and having glanced at it for a moment, sat pale and tranquil, awaiting the event. The horses were providentially stopped, and no bad consequences ensued beyond the terror into which they had all been thrown. When they were a little more composed, some one mentioned "the spell," as they called that little book, and asked to look at it. It was a little text-book, which contained a text of Scripture for every day in the year. The owner smiled as she produced it, laying her finger on the text for the day: "I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer."\* Trusting in him, it was no wonder that she did not fear to die.

One lady was much struck; and the first town they stopped at, she bought a little text-book. Let us hope that it was blessed to her. Such is, and may be, the influence of strangers as they pass through the world Zionward. "Oh for a little of the best wisdom and influence of the Holy Spirit, to walk circumspectly among all men, wise as the serpent and harmless as the dove!"

How many a stranger, sojourning in a pious family, and taking part in their daily worship and simple hymns of praise, has been thus,

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\* Isa. xlix. 26.



under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, won to Jesus. How many a warning word, spoken in love—how many a warning tract, given in prayer, to the stranger with whom we come in momentary contact as we pass through the world, has God made an instrument of power! Therefore is it written, “Cast thy bread upon the waters : for thou shalt find it after many days.”\* In passing through this otherwise weary world, it is the bounden duty of man, woman and child, to speak gentle words—to wear cheerful looks—and, like the church-spire, where the sun may always be observed to linger the longest and the brightest, to point towards heaven.

God knows our motives ; and those who love us, trust to them : but strangers can only judge of us by our actions. A solemn thought, and one that should make us very careful lest there should be any thing in our’s—in our dress, deportment, or conversation—to bring discredit upon religion. A Christian should resemble a sunbeam, shining with a light derived from the “Sun of righteousness.” The amount of good and happiness which we may diffuse around us, by only showing a smiling face and a kind

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\* Eccl. xi. 1.

heart, and speaking kindly—but not always “our own words”—is incalculable.

We remember walking one day through the village with a dear friend. She seemed to have a pleasant word ready for every one we met. The little children looked up in her face and smiled, as they dropped their simple courtesies. The old men uncovered their gray hairs, and seemed to be cheered by her kindly greeting.

“A fine day, friend,” said she to one old man.

“Yes, ma’am, it is very fine.”

“We must thank God for it, and for every good thing.”

“Ay, to be sure; but I never thought of that. I thank God with all my heart.”

“You appear to be very lame, my friend,” she observed to another, who was passing wearily along, and looking hot and tired. She called them all her friends. The old man seemed touched by her sympathizing looks, and told her the whole history of his case; upon which she prescribed some simple remedy, which, perhaps, soon cured him.

The next person we met was a little girl who was crying because she had just upset her basket of ripe blackberries into the dirt. Upon which my friend smilingly suggested that she

might gather more, pointing at the same time to the rich clusters which grew all around; and she soon dried her eyes and followed her advice.

Thus it was that she might be said to pass through those green fields, as Isabel passed through the wood, singing. Thus it is that we should all endeavour to pass through the world, helping, cheering, and comforting one another. People who are always innocently cheerful and good-humoured are very useful in the world; they maintain peace and happiness, and spread a thankful temper around them. It has been well said, that “we have no more right to fling an unnecessary shadow over the spirits of those whom we may casually meet, than we have to fling a stone and break their windows.”

The following testimony is given by one, of a friend:—“She looked as if she had made peace with all the world, and only lived to be glad in the gladness of others, and to weep with those who weep.” It is the description of all who have made peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: “When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?”\* Well may believers pass on their way smiling, and singing the praises of their Redeemer!

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\* Job xxxiv. 29.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE MEMORY OF THE DEAD.

It is well to pause occasionally, and ask ourselves this question, How will they speak of *me* when I am gone?—and God only knows how soon that may be. What will be the effect of my life upon those who are left behind! According as we have lived will be our influence when we are dead.

The world is filled with the voices of the dead. Sweet and solemn voices are they, speaking with unearthly authority; coming back to us as the messages of angels. “There are few who do not number in their families those whose places are vacant at the table and the hearth, and yet who are not reckoned as lost, but only ‘gone before.’” And when the business of daily life is for a while suspended, and its cares are put to rest—nay, often in the midst of the world’s tumult—their voices float down clearly and distinctly from heaven, and say to their own, ‘Come up hither.’” And the more

so, if while on earth they often spoke of Him who is "the Way and the Truth and the Life,"\* and by whom alone we have access to the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

"Beneath every domestic roof," continues the same author, "there are more than are counted by the eye of a stranger. Spirits are there which he does not see, but who are never far from the eyes of the household. Steps are on the stairs, but not for common ears; and familiar places and objects restore familiar smiles and tears, and acts of goodness and words of love which are seen and heard by memory alone." Their influence is ever over us; their footsteps are in our paths; the memorials of them meet our eyes at every turn; their presence is in our dwellings; their voices are in our ears; they still sing to us, as it were, from heaven; still speak to us, help us—guide, gladden, bless us.

How can we have known those whom it is a joy as well as a sorrow to think of, and not be the better for it? Do we not often say of the dead, "Perhaps the eye of affection is on me now, and I will do nothing to wound it!" Alas

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\* John xiv. 6.

for human affection ! Do we not think oftentimes more of the creature than of the Creator ?

“Always,” said a dying Christian, to those who watched and wept around his bed ; “always associate me with your happiest hours ; never think of me in sorrow or gloom. I trust that I am going to the full enjoyment of my Saviour’s purchased blessings. Remember how happy we have been—happiest when thinking and talking about him, our glorious Redeemer.” How cheerful and consoling are memories such as these !

“Many a time,” says a clergyman, (speaking of a departed brother)—“many a time have I seen him reading his Bible, or shutting his closet-door to pray, when I have been going out to a place of public amusement. Many a time have I envied him his sweet sleep when I returned home, weary and excited, and very often disappointed and heart-sick of the world. If it had not been so—if he had gone with me, hand in hand, in folly, instead of insensibly weaning me from it by gentle admonitions, and, above all, by his own example, how different would my feelings be now that I have lost him ! How different would be the influence of his memory !”

“It seems but yesterday,” observed a lady,

(speaking of a dear friend who had passed away many years before)—“it seems but yesterday that we stood together by this very casement, with our arms around each other, and she, the lost one, pointed with her thin hand, with a beautiful smile on her poor, pale face, to the distant spire of the old village-church. And her words of sweet and holy wisdom steal back over my world-wearied spirit like a blessing.”

Old Humphry tells us, that when he is dead and gone, he should wish that others may be able to say of him thus : “It was his to express and call forth thoughts, tender and good and high, and our’s to bless him for them. What cares has he lightened ! What hours and years has he brightened ! And how unsuspectingly, on our parts, did he lead us through earthly objects to heavenly hopes ! He was the friend, the companion, the faithful reprover, and kind adviser and comforter of all.”

Words of admonition or counsel, after the lips that uttered them are sealed in death, acquire a peculiar sacredness. Great is the influence of the departed. Though dead, they yet speak ; and others are stimulated by their example to follow them, as they desired and humbly endeavoured to follow Christ. “There

are murmurings in the air, soft as the footsteps of angels ; and amid them all, I fancy that I can distinguish a gentle voice, bidding me possess my soul in patience until the great summons comes that shall unite us again for evermore."

The influence of the dead is solemn and powerful either for good or evil. Death hallows all the past. How reverently we speak of the departed ! How we treasure up and hide away their words in our hearts ! And it is well for us if they serve to make us happier and better, and teach us to live nearer to Christ, and to believe and put our trust in him as our all-sufficient Saviour. Again, how tenderly we speak of the dead ; how lightly we dwell, nay, how lightly we even think, upon their errors !

How common it is to hear people say of the departed—"Poor man ! he meant well. If his principles and his conduct in many things were not always blameless, he hurt no one but himself. God is very merciful !" As if it were possible for any one to live and die to himself ! Even now the influence of his death is an evil, and a dangerous one, leading others, in their affection, to take a false view of right and wrong, and exclaim, "Peace, peace ! when there is no peace." Yes, God is very merciful, but it is



through Christ Jesus alone. To all who reject Christ, he is a consuming fire.

We have heard and known in several instances of a pious mother being taken away when her children were very young, while her memory remained with them even to old age. The recollection of the words which she spoke, the hymns she taught them, the tales she told, old Bible histories, such as children like to listen to, the books she loved, the song she sang to them, returned at intervals throughout all their lives, to cheer and strengthen, and lead them heavenward. Alas for the parents, the brothers and sisters, the friends, who daily pass from the earth, and leave behind them no such memories; who live and die, and no one is the better for their life or their death!

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.”\* Blessed are they who sing God’s praises as they pass through the world; and when they die, like Much-afraid, in the “Pilgrim’s Progress,” “go through the river singing.” Hereafter they shall stand upon

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\* Rev. xiv. 13.

the sea of glass, having the harps of God in their hands, and singing the song of Moses and the Lamb—"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."\* "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."†

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\* Rev. xv. 3.

† Rev. v. 13.



## CHAPTER XIII.

## INFLUENCE OF LITTLE CHILDREN.

JESUS loves little children, and he loves to see them happy and cheerful, and hear them singing his praises as they pass through the world. We read in the Scriptures, that he rebuked those who would have hindered them from approaching him, saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." And that "he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."\* God has often condescended to make use of little children as instruments to win sinners to himself; and he will again, if they love and endeavour to please him in all things. Isabel was only a little child. Many a little child has he made the messenger of his saving mercy to a whole household.

We once heard of a poor but industrious woman, who was afflicted with a most violent temper. She quarrelled with her neighbours, and beat her children on the smallest provoca-

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\* Mark x. 14, 16.

tion. On one occasion, after a hard day's work, she came home more than usually irritable, and was tempted, in her uncontrolled anger, to strike her youngest child.

The little one shrank away weeping to bed: and then the mother's heart, not wholly hardened, rebuked her for what she had done; and she crept up-stairs, thinking by this time that he had cried himself to sleep, and longing to kiss the poor little arm which in her wild passion she had so cruelly struck. But the child was still awake. She heard him talking as she went up the narrow stairs, and paused to listen. He was praying in his childish manner—

“Oh, dear Lord Jesus! pray forgive my mother. And keep her from being so cross to us; and give her a new heart.”

The poor woman could bear it no longer; and going into the chamber where the little child still kneeled, she flung herself upon her knees beside him, and began to pray in right good earnest, using the same petition, that God would be pleased to take away her stony heart, and give her a heart of flesh.

“It must indeed have been a heart of stone that could injure you!” added she, taking the half-frightened child in her arms, and cover-



He was praying in his childish manner.—p 96.



ing him with kisses. "Can you forgive me, my Johnny? Can you forgive your unhappy mother?"

"Our teacher says that we must not only forgive our enemies, but pray for them," replied the child, clasping his arms about his mother's neck, and resting his head lovingly upon her bosom.

These simple words sent a fresh pang to the heart of the conscience-stricken woman. "I am indeed my children's enemy," thought she, "and my own enemy; but above all, I am at enmity with God. O Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, for Christ's sake."

From that night a change came over her; slowly at first, for bad habits and tempers are slow to mend: but nothing is impossible with God. And the prayer of the little Sunday-school child was heard and granted in her now peaceful and happy home.

It was the custom of another dear child to walk up and down the room while learning and repeating her hymns and Scripture texts. Her grandfather was an old man, but alas! he did not believe in Jesus. He loved, nevertheless, to hear the child's cheerful voice, and to have her with him continually. After a time, he

grew so feeble that he was obliged to take to his bed; and would often ask Clara, (for that was the little girl's name,) to come and tell him something about the Saviour of whom she was always talking and singing: and was thus gradually brought, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, to the knowledge of "the truth as it is in Jesus," and to place his whole trust and confidence in the merits of his divine Redeemer.

A lady, who was very apt to complain and murmur about trifling grievances, instead of thinking, as it was far wiser, how to make the best of them, and endeavouring to be submissive under them, went one fine summer day to visit a sick child. She found the little invalid, pale and exhausted, lying on a couch by the open window, which looked into a pleasant garden, where his brothers and sisters were at play.

"It must be very dull for you, my poor child," said she, in a pitying voice. "Do you not long to be well enough to play again?"

"No, not *long* to be well enough," replied the little sufferer; "I should like it if it were God's will, but he knows best about every thing." The lady went away thoughtful and conscience-stricken.

Another little boy, staying with his mother



on a visit at the house of a friend, and observing that they were about to separate at night without the family prayers which he had always been accustomed to sit up and join in at home, being an only child and much indulged, said to her in a whisper—

“Why, mother, they are all going to their beds as if there were no God in heaven.”

The lady of the house was struck by his words; and writing to his mother shortly afterwards, bade her tell Willie, that when they came again, he would find that they had prayers now every night and morning.

There is something singularly touching in the piety of the young. It is related of one, by a writer who dearly loves little children, and has kept a record of the lives and deaths of many such, who have lived and died in the Lord, that “he was not only good himself, but did what he could to make others so too, especially those who were nearest to him. He was very watchful over his brothers and sisters, and would not suffer them to use bad words, or do wrong, if he could by any means hinder it—but he would be putting them upon that which was good: and when he did rebuke at any time, it was as one not a little concerned for God’s honour, and

with a touching mixture of childishness and gentle gravity."

It is recorded of another child, that "she was the joy and delight of all the Christians thereabout in those times, quickening and raising the spirits of those who conversed with her; and although but a babe, she was a great help to both father and mother: and her memory is sweet to this day. She walked as a stranger in the world, making haste to a better country, of which she was continually talking and singing, until she made others long to go there too. And after she had done a great deal of work for her own soul and for others also, she fell asleep in Jesus, when she was about ten years old, and went home to heaven." Thus may little children pass through the world singing hosannas and hallelujahs to their Redeemer God.



## CHAPTER XIV.

LET US PASS HOMEWARD SINGING.

“WHAT a delightful privilege,” exclaims one, in the fulness of his heart, “to express and call forth thoughts high and good, to lighten the load of care, and to brighten the declining years of age;—to bring forth stores of knowledge and wisdom, to approve myself as a friend, companion, corrector, adviser, and comforter, to become a messenger of peace and love to all, and point them all to heaven!”

When the burden of sin and guilt fell off from Christian’s back at the foot of the cross, as we read in the Pilgrim’s Progress, “three shining ones came and saluted him with ‘Peace be with thee.’ The first said unto him, ‘Thy sins be forgiven thee;’ the second stripped him of his rags, and clothed him with change of raiment, (the white robes of Christ’s righteousness;) the third also set a mark on his forehead, and gave him a roll, with a seal upon it,” (the witness of the Spirit, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.) No wonder that he should “go on his way singing.”

It is well to remark how often Christian poured forth his songs of rejoicing as he passed onwards to the celestial city. All pilgrims should sing, that others may hear them and be glad. The shepherd-boy sang in the "Valley of Humiliation," as he sat tending his father's sheep among the lilies. Even in the night God giveth us songs.\*

As Isabel went singing through the wood, cheering and comforting those who heard her, although she knew it not; so let us sit singing our simple hymns by the fireside, or as we pass to and fro among friends and kindred in our homes. Let the gifted—those for whose voices the world listens—be careful to lift them up for God; while the lowly and the loving sit at his feet singing the same song—the song of the angels—"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."†

Walk as the children of light, that others "may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven;"‡ not ourselves—let us remember that—but "our Father which is in heaven." Let our studies, our conversation one with another, the letters we write, even

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\* Job xxxv. 10.

† Luke ii. 14.

‡ Matt. v. 16.

our recreations, have the same great object in view, the praise and glory of our Redeemer. Let us sing of him as we pass through this world to the better land. Let us endeavour not only to live, but also to die to him who died for us. "Young men, and maidens; old men, and children: let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven."\*

A little child went out to walk with her nurse; and she sang as she passed through the pleasant fields, or paused to gather the wild-flowers which grew on the banks and hedge-rows. But the way was long, and the twilight was coming on, and it was rough walking in the lanes; besides which, in thrusting out her hand to reach a bunch of wild honeysuckle, she wounded it rather severely with a thorn that grew there. And by and by she began to be weary, and at length even to weep with pain and fatigue. The nurse tried to cheer her by telling her that they had only a short distance further to go, and should soon be at home now.

"Are you sure, nurse? quite sure?" asked the child, a little more cheerfully; and just

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\* Ps. cxlviii. 12, 13.

then, catching a glimpse of the white house between the trees, she sang again for joy, with the tears still upon her cheeks.

Thus it often is with the child of God. At first he can sing cheerfully enough; but if it gets rough walking, or the sun ceases to shine, or he meets, (as he is sure to do,) with thorns springing up by the way, he begins to doubt, and be weary, and to hang his harp on the willows, and perhaps sits down to weep. But let a friendly voice only be near, to bid him be of good cheer, for he is almost at home now; let the eye of faith catch but one glimpse of his Father's house, and, with tears still glittering on his cheeks, he will burst forth into singing, and rejoice and give thanks.

Does the Christian complain that the world likes other music, and does not care to listen to his songs—and that it is lonely to be singing all by himself? Does he

“Faint because he feels alone,  
With none to strike his favourite tone,  
And join his homeward strain?”

Courage, friend! Who knows but you may yet win your brother or your sister, your parents or your children, as the case may be?

Courage, ye gifted! You know not what

good you are doing, as you pass singing through the world; or what good your songs may do to others when you are no more.

Courage, ye lowly and loving ones! Sing on, and you will yet find an echo in some kindred heart.

Courage, ye that grieve over one dearer than a brother! Be faithful, and it may be that God will give you your friend.

Courage, ye who write, and read, and give away good books; if it be but a tract, God will surely bless it, if given in the name of Christ.

Courage, ye who have given up worldly pleasures for Jesus' sake. He has better things in store for you. Sing on! You shall not always walk alone; who knows but your example may win others?

Courage, ye who feel that you are sojourning among strangers and in a strange land. Endeavour to pass through it, singing, to heaven, that the world may hear your songs, and perhaps be won to join in them.

Courage, ye who are already passing! Courage, ye sick and dying saints! Try and pass over Jordan singing, that the living may hear your songs as they stand on the other side, and long to follow you to heaven,

through Him who is the way, the truth, and the life.

Courage, ye little children! Sing on! You will soon be at home. If the way should be rough, and you are weary, you have a loving Saviour who will take you in his arms, and carry you upon his bosom. Sing on, little children! Do not be afraid of being left behind. Jesus loves little children, and loves to hear them sing his praises, and to see them cheerful and happy as they go through the world.

Oh that all our readers, before they close this little volume, would put to themselves earnestly and prayerfully the following solemn question: "I, TOO, AM PASSING THROUGH THE WORLD, AND WHO IS THE BETTER?"















